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SUCCESS STORY

Micro-hydropower Plant Spurs Economic Growth

Dodarak Village's new plant brings electricity and opens the door for business opportunities.



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A power plant technician turns on the micro-hydropower plant for the first time, giving electricity to a community of 1,200.



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Fans and lights are switched on for the first time in village head Malik Mir Alam Khan's guest room.

Electricity heats homes, provides light, and powers businesses, contributing to economic growth and higher living standards. While Afghanistan's power grid does not yet provide for the entire country, USAID support is bringing electricity to remote villages through the construction of approximately 300 micro-hydropower plants and solar and wind power systems. Hydropower plants harness the energy of moving water, creating electricity out of a renewable natural resource.

In April 2009, Dodarak Village in Nangarhar Province inaugurated its own 60 kWh micro-hydropower plant, and residents received electricity for the first time. The electricity will improve the villagers' quality of life and open the door for new business opportunities. Currently, the plant provides 1,200 residents with electricity, allows local shops to sell cold food and drinks, and has the capacity to serve 600 additional households in neighboring villages.

The power plant, built in compliance with international standards, will provide electricity for up to 40 years. Electricity is available to the village's residents and businesses for a small, affordable fee, which will be used to pay power plant technicians and perform needed maintenance.

Capitalizing on the new supply of electricity, USAID has worked with Dodarak residents over the past nine months to develop businesses in their village. The village will soon host a strawberry jam factory, a flour mill, a textile factory, and a carpentry facility, none of which could have operated without the electricity that the micro-hydropower plant provides. Entrepreneurs are also opening small businesses – such as an ice cream shop – now that electricity is available. These businesses will provide needed employment and accelerate economic development in Dodarak and surrounding areas.

Excited at the new development prospects for his community, village head Malik Mir Alam Khan said, "This project is a blessing to the people of this village. In addition to the prospects that it will light up more houses, small industries will be established, employing a large number of people. The economy of the community has improved and I am sure more significant, positive changes will occur."